Close Your Eyes

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by OneEndEARling

Summary

"Fate has a habit of not letting us choose our own endings." -- Hannibal Lecter

A Tristhad:Hannigram hybrid idea which was prompted by a Hannibal twt user asking what if Alana's hypnosis session with Will uncovered a previous King Arthur life?

Notes

In the King Arthur (2004) movie, director Antoine Fuqua has stated that Tristan's avian companion is a hawk. In the mythology, however, Tristan is a falconer... so I've chosen to keep the bird a falcon, named Isolde. Just so you know that the discrepancy is purposeful =)

Chapter 1

“Take Galahad with you.”

King Arthur’s offhand command for company might have annoyed Tristan but, much to my relief, he didn’t show it.

We were setting up camp for the night. As was the usual routine before sundown, Tristan would circle and secure the perimeter. Usually he did it alone, but not tonight.

’Reminder to secretly thank Arthur later,’ I told myself, and tried to hide my grin.

We mounted our horses and headed north first. Tristan released his falcon and gave it a minute's lead.

“I’m actually very pleased for the opportunity to ride with you...” I offered. Then, “I mean, I’ve often wondered what strategies are involved in this very important task. And it is important; we all sleep a bit easier because of your expert work.”

Tristan glanced at me but didn’t say a word. Instead, he kicked his horse into a gallop and took off through the trees. I hurried to catch up; eventually he slowed to a trot and allowed me to pull up alongside.

“I don’t actually do anything,” he stated with a shrug. “All of the work is up there,” he pointed to the falcon flying above our heads.

If he was trying to discourage me, it wasn’t going to work. If he was trying to make himself seem less capable, less *incredible* in my eyes, that wasn’t going to happen. For as long as I’d been one of King Arthur’s Knights, I had admired Tristan. He was older, wiser. Skilled yet humble, unabashedly himself. And always calm and focused in battle. Not to mention his archery skills were the best I’d ever seen. And his hair!

I could go on and on.

Lately, I’ve been surprising myself with new preoccupations. I notice his whereabouts often, his comings and goings. I wait for opportunities to be in close proximity with him… and I don’t often realize I’m doing it. I feel *bewitched.*

I hope others don’t notice. A hot flush spreads across my face as I’m thinking about all of this, and I turn away in case Tristan happens to look in my direction.

Ah, what to do! It seems the more I fight it, the stronger the draw.

Like a moth to a flame…

I might have to speak to Gawain about this, perhaps he would understand?

I’m startled by the falcon returning, alighting upon Tristan’s outstretched arm. The silent flutter of wings between us unsettles my horse into pulling back a few steps. Tristan nuzzles the bird, and I can’t quite hear what he is saying to it, but the body language of the two is intimate. I can’t help but be mesmerized, my heart melting.

He catches me watching, smiling. His lips slowly curl into his own smile, followed by a wink.

Aye, Gods, he MUST know.

I swallow hard and try to regain a stern composure. “So, anything of interest from the bird?” I focus on the trees behind him for fear he’d read my secret from my very eyes.

“She’s telling me the obvious,” his voice is amused.

“And that is?”

“We won’t be disturbed tonight...”

Chapter 2

It had been nearly a fortnight since that evening, and I'd done my best to avoid Tristan during that time.

Nothing had happened. I mean, I hadn't allowed anything to happen. I didn't want to acknowledge the hot, flushed embarrassment of my real feelings… I just, I wasn't ready. Whatever Tristan thought he knew about my intentions, I tried my hardest to dissuade him of them.

I still watched him, keeping my gaze low and ready to look away at a moment's notice. Try as I might, it was impossible to completely ignore him. Especially at the archery range. Gods, the man is nothing short of magnificent with a bow!

I turned down Arthur's invitations to accompany Tristan on future perimeter securings, making up excuses to stay, instead, at the camp. Perhaps there was firewood to gather with Gawain, or a swordsman lesson I'd been meaning to approach Lancelot about… I doubt Tristan even cared. After the first few declinations, he had stopped waiting to see if I'd join him, releasing his falcon and riding off before the question was even uttered.

I was relieved to see his attention leave me, but I'll admit, the butterflies felt better than the emptiness I'd decided was best suited for me.

T'was all just silliness anyway. It didn't mean anything.

Our next mission for Arthur involved a few nights' ride to one of the southernmost townships. We were simply needed on hand as support during a land dispute should tempers flare and a skirmish break out.

Evenings were fun, spent drinking and singing at the local town pub. It was easier for us all to relax on full bellies, and we would often stay well into the night, telling stories and playing games.

"Oh, I've been practicing that one," I told Gawain. He challenged me to knife targets, which he had completely bested me at months ago.

"Really? So you think you can beat me now?" He laughed.

I sprang up and lifted a stool onto its side on the high table. It had a knot in the wood near its center. Perfect.

"Hit that," I challenged, the few pints under my belt making me uncharacteristically brash… I didn't even know if *I* could hit that target from 20 paces, might be lucky just to hit the stool period!

Tristan rose from his table, munching on an apple. "If the two of you aim with knives like you do with arrows, I would be wise to stand behind you."

Gawain adjusted his pants, flipped his knife in his hand and wound his wrist back. He stuck out his tongue and closed an eye as he released, the knife blade lodging smartly in the wood just above the knot.

The men cheered and a boisterous smile lit Gawain's amiable face.

"But you missed!" I chided.

"Aye, but you won't get any closer! If I'd been aiming at your cock with that throw, you'd be pissing from a new hole!"

Men laughed, and it was my turn to throw. Tristan was still watching as well, biting from his apple. He stood directly behind me as I lined up, my knife in hand. "More left," he whispered in my ear.

His breath hit my skin and set it ablaze. I felt a red heat climb the back of my neck, gooseflesh pricking my bare arms. I adjusted my alignment and threw. The knife twirled in the air and landed solidly alongside the knot.

"AH HA!" I yelled victoriously.

Suddenly, I felt a blade whirr past my head, and watched as its point embedded exactly in the middle of my knife's hilt.

A hushed "woah" rippled through the crowd. Gawain spoke first in awe, "Tristan! How'd you do that??"

I turned to see the man still eating his apple like nothing had happened. He closed an eye as he pointed to the knives, "I aim for the middle…" he explained the obvious.

My face reddened. How dare he be so *fucking cool?* His eyes met mine and he slyly winked. I nearly choked.

"I can teach you, if you want?"

I swallowed hard, my throat going dry.

"Of course he wants you to," Gawain said. I shot him the look of daggers, but he turned away, smiling innocently. *Fuck him.*

Before I could decline, Tristan had gathered our knives from the stool. He grabbed my wrist. I looked down at his hand, his grip firm. I'd never noticed how slender Tristan's fingers were. Elegant, even. The veins of his hand stood out, ropes under the skin. My wrist appeared slight within his grasp.

I felt my palms turn clammy.

"The secret is in the wrist. It must stay loose and relaxed," His face was so close to mine as he spoke, but he looked from our hands to the target and back again. He shifted his feet, turning to stand behind me, the warmth of his chest broad against my back.

"Like this…" he whispered, his lips against my ear.

If he'd seen my face, he would see a thousand shades of red. I wanted to wrench free, I wanted to hide. But an equally strong part of me wanted to return this embrace. I wanted to press against him, to hear his heartbeat, to feel his skin against mine.

His words grew faint and I could no longer concentrate. I'd been holding my breath, and now my consciousness was leaving me…

Chapter 3

"Will. Will, are you alright?"

Will opened his eyes and focused on Alana's face before him. He was vaguely aware of the metronome's even and rhythmic clicking between them. He had been panting, and now, coming to the present, his breathing began to deepen and slow. The details of the room they were seated in slowly came into his conscious realization. Three cold and sterile walls, the fourth made entirely of glass. The hard chair under him, the table in front of him that his shackled wrists were placed on, the chain between them clinking against a metal bind bolted to the top.

He took a deep breath. The faint scent of institutional antiseptic tinged his nose.

It was one of the privacy rooms at Dr. Chilton's Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane.

That's right. He had asked Alana to help him access his forgotten memories, a wild stab at absolving himself of the unthinkable. He wasn't quite sure of what he was trying to find. His innocence? Hannibal Lecter's guilt? Maybe just anything to convince himself that he wasn't insane?

Alana's concerned look softened as his blue eyes fixed on hers. "What did you see?"

A slow smile spread across Will's face. "Trees… and horses. And a bird. It was… not a familiar place, but one that *felt* familiar, like I'd been there before, a long time ago."

Alana studied Will's expression, reading the wistful look in his eyes. A daydream? It didn't sound like anything useful for Will's case. His mind might be creating a safe place given the possibility of a cruel reality. A mind on fire could produce any number of safe havens when faced with trauma.

"It was more of a feeling, I think," Will continued. "I was happy." He smiled weakly, and Alana fought the sudden urge to hug the shackled man before her.

"Any clues to how you… I mean, what might have led you to kill--"

"I didn't kill anyone," Will cut her off. "You believe that I did these horrible things?"

She shook her head and took his hands in hers. "I believe the Will Graham sitting across from me now is incapable of that violence. I believe you lost your mind and, for periods of time, you weren't the Will Graham that I know."

'But does anyone really know Will Graham?' Will mused inwardly.

After Alana had left and Will was returned to his cell, he thought about what he'd seen under hypnosis. Everything had come through so vividly, like he was watching himself on a movie

screen. Except it wasn't a version of him that he recognized. Existing in his mind's eye, he watched his actions as his own, with purposes and intentions that he didn't question. He could only compare it to dreaming in deja vu, watching people he knew in a story he couldn't predict.

And the emotions! *Everything felt so real*. How do you create feelings like these without them actually being real? Will couldn't remember the last time he'd been so drawn, so attracted to anyone before. How did he know the man they called Tristan? Someone he had known in a past life? What did it all mean? A series of biochemical reactions fueled by cortisol and endorphins set loose in the playground of an overactive imagination, but fuck, it was addictive just like a drug.

He wanted to feel more. He would ask Alana to put him under yet again, he needed to.

Chapter 4

“Hello, Will.”

“Dr. Lecter.” Will suddenly felt completely turned off to the idea of visitors, especially ones who were framing him for murder. The darkness of his cell slowly came back into focus, the air stale and institutional–-completely unlike that of his outdoor memory palace, where he’d just been.

“Lost in thought?” Hannibal’s attempt at levity only angered Will.

“Not lost. Not anymore.” He scowled darkly at the elegantly-dressed older gentleman on the other side of the bars. A man who was supposed to be his paddle, his friend. Someone he had apparently grown too comfortable with too quickly, let down the walls of his fort far too hastily, and now such missteps had proven quite damning and detrimental.

Will continued, “I used to hear my thoughts inside my skull with the same tone, timbre and accent as if the words were coming out of my mouth…”

“And now?” Hannibal sounded almost amused, knowing where Will’s accusation was going, and enjoying the truth in it.

“Now my inner voice sounds like you. I can’t get you out of my head.” Will glared as he spat out the words.

Hannibal acknowledged the bitter tone, and coolly deflected, “Friendship can sometimes involve a breach of individual separateness.”

“A blurring of self and friend?”

“Yes.”

Will shook his head of messy curls. “You’re not my friend. The light from friendship won’t reach us for a million years. That’s how far away from friendship we are.” He spoke through clenched teeth, his anger palpable.

Hannibal blinked, admittedly stung. “I imagine it’s easier to believe I am responsible for those murders than it is to accept that you are.”

“I am not responsible for those murders,” Will pushed forward, sensing Hannibal’s split-second moment of weakness, “but perhaps I confess to everything. Perhaps I let them see how mistaken you were, how *horribly irresponsible* both you and Jack were to allow me back into the field. How blinded you both were by delusions of success and greatness that you could control what was happening inside an unstable profiler’s head–”

“Will, stop.” Hannibal’s calm exterior cracking almost imperceptibly, “You don’t mean what you are saying.”

“Oh, but Dr. Lecter, I do.” Will’s lips curled into a sinister grin, “And if you believe I can’t take everyone down with me, I am sorry to inform you that you have completely underestimated me. When the dust settles and I am found guilty of multiple grizzly murders, sentenced to ride the lightning, and you… your reputation left in shambles, how will you feel? Or, maybe I take the plea deal and demand to be locked away far from here, and you. You’ll never see *your friend* again.”

Hannibal couldn’t answer. Could only stare back at the man in the cell with a mixture of surprise and adoration, but also a touch of apprehension.

Chapter 5

”Close your eyes.
Feel the heaviness in your limbs...
Imagine yourself in a safe and relaxing place…
...safe and secure here, safe to relax completely…
No matter how deeply you go…
...my voice will go with you.” – Alana

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I was back at the wall, being sent by Arthur to retrieve a treaty scroll and I felt honored that he entrusted me with the task. Sitting a little straighter on my horse, I promised I would return in a few nights time.

“Tristan will accompany you and keep you out of trouble,” Arthur added.

I reddened. “My Lord, I don’t believe I need--”

“I haven’t the time to argue, Galahad, or I shall simply send Tristan on his own.”

I sighed, “I understand, my Lord.” Tristan rode up to me, releasing his falcon. Humiliated, I kicked my horse into a gallop, leaving him to hastily chase after me.

It wasn’t until about an hour’s time into our journey that I finally allowed Tristan to see my face.

“You’re upset?” he asked, it was more a statement than a question.

I shook my head, “No… I mean, yes. I had hoped Arthur believed I could carry out this task without… without a babysitter.” I set my jaw sternly as I finally looked at Tristan. “It appears I was a fool.”

“Arthur was going to send you alone. I asked him if he would send me with you.” Tristan spoke matter of factly, shrugging his shoulders like it was no big deal.

I stopped my horse. *”What? Why?”*

“Isolde requested it.” He tilted his head upwards to look at his bird circling overhead.

His answer felt like a mean joke. “Do you really think I am nothing but a stupid child?” I snapped.

“No, but I wrongly assumed you had a sense of humor,” he raised his eyebrows and rolled his eyes at me.

“If you’re going to do nothing but make jokes at my expense, I’d rather be without the company!” I huffed.

“That was not my intention at all,” he said softly, and I instantly felt bad for getting worked up.

“I’m sorry, I just… sometimes my mouth is faster than my brain,” I looked down, feeling foolish.

“I’ve learned to accept that the words coming from your mouth are not always what you intend.” He saw that I was about to protest, and covered my mouth lightly with his hand. He leaned in, looking me directly in the eyes, “I believe your heart.”

He continued to stare at me for what felt like an eternity. My eyes stayed locked with his, his hand remained over my mouth. A disheveled braid fell across his face. I became aware of my own heartbeat thundering in my ears, fast and anxious.

What was happening?

Then he smiled and playfully flicked my curls with his free hand before releasing me, and the moment was broken.

“I want to show you something. Come.” He veered to the north through a thicket of saplings. What could there possibly be all the way out here to show me? And shouldn’t we be on our way? There was still a full day of riding ahead of us. But of course, here I was following him. I could distinctly hear the sound of water nearby, perhaps we were close to a river.

I caught up to Tristan at the edge of a stream. The sun was at such an angle, golden rays filtered through the branches of trees, illuminating the clear shallow water as it skipped effortlessly over a bed of smooth river stones. A large oak grew majestically from a projection of dark rich earth and tall green grasses into the stream, a stately exclamation of the peninsula. It looked like something out of a fairytale.

“This place is magical,” I whispered. I couldn’t help the grin of enchantment that crept across my face.

Tristan smiled. “Isolde first brought me here when I was feeling distressed," he nodded towards the oak. “I sat under that tree, closed my eyes, and listened to the water. I felt my concerns leave me, and my priorities come back into focus.” He dismounted from his horse, feet landing with a soft thud on the earth below.

I followed him to the water’s edge. There was a falcon’s feather lying in the tall grass, and I bent down to pick it up. Isolde. Closing my eyes, I took a deep breath. The air was cold but fresh and filled with life. It felt cleansing, like starting over. I heard a splash beside me and, when I opened my eyes again, Tristan was standing in the stream looking back over his shoulder at me with a smile on his rugged face.

He held his hand out to me, but I hesitated. “There are worse things than wet shoes,” he chuckled.

There was something about the way the sunlight fell across his face, or the soft kindness in his eyes, or the yawning loneliness in my heart… maybe a combination of all three. I suddenly felt that I would follow this man to the ends of the earth, why do I continue to fight it?

I splashed into the water and placed my hand in his, surprised by how warm his skin was despite the cold day. I felt like a lost boy coming home. Allowing him to lead me across the shallow stream to stand under the grand oak with him on the other side, I was suddenly overcome by a wave of shyness. My face felt hot with a flush I couldn't help.

"Why did you bring me here?" I whispered, my gaze averted downwards.

"This is a special place to me," he said. He brought his hand to my face, cupping my jaw and tilting my head so that I had no choice but to look into his eyes. Mesmerizing amber eyes. "I wouldn't bring just anyone here, but I wanted you here with me. And," he brought our faces closer, "I believe your heart wants to be here, too. With me."

"Will.

Will.

Will?"

Startled, Will opened his eyes and found himself facing the far wall of his cold stone cell. Jack's voice came from behind him, at the bars. "Where were you just now?"

"Not here." He sighed and turned to face Jack. "What can I do for you, Jack?"

"Nothing," Jack looked uneasy. "I probably shouldn't even be here, but Lecter wanted me to give you something."

"Why not deliver it himself," Will sneered, "Too afraid he might give away that he's framing me for murder?"

Jack ignored the bitter vitriol in Will's tone. "Honestly, I haven't spoken to Lecter in a few days. He sent this package to my office with instructions to hand it to you. It's a book. And don't worry, I've already searched between the pages for metal objects." Seeing as Will made no intent to approach him and receive the book, Jack fed it between the bars and tossed it onto Will's bunk.

"Guess he figures I have plenty of time on my hands to read."

"There isn't much to read," Jack quipped. "It looks like a bunch of math equations and time travel theories."

Will was already disinterested. "Hmph." He turned back to the wall, "Goodbye, Jack."

After Jack's footfalls had receded into the distance, Will looked down at his hands. There was something in his closed fist. He slowly opened his fingers and shakily released his breath: a falcon's feather.

Chapter 6

It was a beautiful day.

Golden rays cast glittering patches along the water. Will felt completely at peace in his memory palace, water up to his thighs, casting a fly fishing line downstream. The air and the water were cold and, while he didn't actually catch fish during his time here, it was more the opportunity to be away from people and comforted by nature, that was the goal.

It had always felt like a special place. Standing in the cold water, listening to the daylight, Will couldn't quite say why, but coming here always felt like coming home.

There was no concept of time here. He could fish for hours or minutes. Not that it actually mattered. Going back to reality meant returning to the same unyielding stone and bars, stoic frustration and anger at the circumstances he found himself in; betrayed by friends who he'd thought would stand by him. It was just better to not be reminded that they didn't believe him. Even his own psychiatrist. Apparently, you can't enter a professional relationship with someone and expect them to not attempt to frame you.

He figured it must have been his fault for not being a more likable person. So he spent more and more time "outdoors," as it was the only way to get out of his BSHCI cell, besides hypnosis. If he was going to be alone, he would rather be alone here. Today though, his palace was blurred, something not quite the same.

"Maybe I'm using the wrong bait," Will pondered.

He reached into one of his vest pockets and produced a red feathered lure. He remembered making this one, twisting the thread just right, with knots he could tie in his sleep if he had to. The redness of the feather sprang out at him, the contrast with its surroundings so deep and rich, like an overexposed photograph.

There were no teeth or bone chips, hair, blood vessels or other damning forensic biological materials. Even if he knew how to harvest such items, he wouldn't know how to preserve them in such a way to make them serviceable. The whole process sounded like it could be quite complicated, but also… impressive. He had to admit as much.

The wind rustled the leaves of the trees that lined his stream. He breathed deeply, tilting his head upwards towards the sky. He saw something moving high above the treeline, a dark spot against the smooth blue canvas. Barely visible, he thought the silhouette was shaped like a bird. Will squinted for a better look and raised his hand to shield the sun from his eyes. Sure enough, it was a falcon circling.

"Close your eyes. Wade into the quiet of the stream."

Tristan's voice suddenly filled Will's head. Tears welled in his eyes and ran down his cheeks. He couldn't understand why, but it felt like the only answer.

“Help me? Please?” he whispered.

The bird continued to circle, its shape enlarging in size as it slowly descended.

”Go to the oak, I will find you there."

Was there a metronome clicking? Will couldn’t recall starting another hypnosis session with Alana. He strained his ears, trying to hear her voice, the metronome, anything. His feet splashing in the water, he waded downstream, following the falcon. In the distance, there approached another sound, a galloping of hooves.

Chapter 7

Jack burst into Frederick Chilton's office. Alana was already there, and by the look on her face, she wasn't getting a satisfactory answer out of the BSHCI director.

"Jack, Frederick says Will is gone."

"What do you mean he's gone?!" Jack boomed.

Frederick stepped between them, hands raised in a weak attempt to assuage them both, "There's got to be some explanation," he stammered, "He was in his cell at lights out, but this morning, I..."

He followed after Jack and Alana as they hurried to the cellblock, pushing past a set of guards who were studying the uncompromised locks to the block and Will's gated cell door.

"I've gone through the videotape footage, and there's nothing," Frederick continued. He wrung his hands and paced back to the entrance of the cellblock, as if retracing his steps might show him something he'd missed.

"There can't be nothing!" Jack's exasperation made his voice crack. He and Alana stepped into Will's empty cell. Jack covered his face with his hands and took a deep breath, trying to stay calm. "I just saw him a few days ago, and I can tell you he did not look like a man planning a jailbreak!" He glared at Alana and lowered his voice, "Dr. Bloom, did Will seem… agitated during his sessions with you? Do you have any idea what he might have been thinking the last time you met with him?"

Alana swallowed. "No, Jack. He was peaceful during our sessions. He looked forward to them, even requested more time under hypnosis."

"And you gave him this time?"

"Well, yes," she answered, scowling at a perceived questioning of her decision being anything but professional. "If I could bring him any semblance of peace during what was obviously a very traumatic time for him, you know I would do that in a heartbeat."

Jack set his jaw and strode quickly from Will's cell. "We need to set up a search radius, he can't have gotten that far on foot. I don't want to file a report until after we've done a thorough inspection of the hospital grounds..." Chilton scampered out to follow Jack, leaving Alana alone in Will's cell. She circled the inside, looking at the cold dark walls and feeling the abject hopelessness that emanated from the stones.

It hadn't occurred to her how cruel it was to keep someone in such a place.

She glanced at Will's bunk, eyes landing on the book Jack had given him the other day. There was something protruding from between the pages. Alana picked up the book, flipping to the

marked page. As she did, a crumpled falcon feather fluttered to the floor. Written on the page, in Hannibal's unmistakable script, was a single sentence:

"If I can't have you in this world, I shall find you in another."

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